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Morganroth-Gullette, Margaret. *Ending Ageism or How not to Shoot Old People*. Rutgers University Press, 2017 (268pp). ISBN: 9780813589299.

In her latest and most innovative book, titled *Ending Ageism*, Margaret Morganroth-Gullette, an award-winning ageist critic and academic, examines aging in modern Western societies. Her starting point is the self-evident truth that growing old is an unavoidable physical process which young people blissfully disregard or dismiss as a far-distant state of being. Having lost her mother just a few years prior to writing this book, Morganroth-Gullette often becomes quite sentimental, adopting a more personal stance not only as an aging person herself, but as a woman, too.

In her attempt to analyse ageism in modern societies, Morganroth-Gullette seeks to disentangle it from social bias and cultural restrictions. In the introduction, she points out that people "are aged by culture" (xiii), since youth is celebrated in commercial culture through images that project the freshness, vivacity, and dynamism of youth. Consequently, as people grow older, they feel socially and emotionally marginalized by a number of conscious or unconscious attitudes and behaviours directed at them: "intolerance of our appearance," "invisibility," "disgust at our apparent weakness," "unwillingness to look us in the eye or spend time in our company" (xxi). As Morganroth-Gullette argues, it is "how we are treated rather than our physiology that hurts" (xx). At the same time, she brings forward a sociopolitical approach to ageism by stating that young people tend to hold the older generations accountable for their low

In the first chapter, the writer approaches ageism as "a systemic vice" (15) influencing all aspects of life, such as employment, health care, family or society. Although "ageism is not

experienced over the entire life course, as racism typically is," midlife and post-midlife people feel excluded and marginalized from "a culture that relentlessly questions the value of the later-life age classes" (12). Family, one's alleged haven, becomes a basic source of anxiety; the children are often ignorant of their parents' fears or anxieties, excluding them or taking economic advantage of them. Morganroth-Gullette, being an aging woman herself, could not overlook the bias that women have to face more often, compared to the men of their age. In particular, she comments on the "misogynistic ageist hate speech" (12) that women are usually confronted with by younger people. Even in popular culture, the image of the old shrew projected, for example, in Walt Disney's fairytales, contributes to the solidification of age/gender stereotyping.

The second part of the book consists of Five Special Sessions, each being analysed in a different chapter. In the First Session, the author examines the visual depiction of old people through the camera lens, both commercially and in art. She points that aging people are almost excluded from advertisements or, when being present in any of them, are rather ridiculed as being incompetent or ignorant. More specifically, Morganroth-Gullette comments that "food is often photographed more carefully than old people are" (31), since we live in a society where "the prevalent age gaze is youthful" (24). The writer dwells both on the photographic milieu - who is taking their picture and where- and on the sentiments of old people when depicted in a photograph, explaining that old people usually do not like to be photographed for fear of encountering their aging self.

The third chapter examines young people's use of the internet in relation to the emergence of an ageist hate language. In particular, the writer traces "verbal ageism on social networking sites" (54), and especially on Facebook, which is vastly used by people between

twenty and twenty-nine years old in order to project their hate for the older ones. Young people's behavior on social media is driven by the "unstable illusion that 'being young' means 'I'll stay in this age class forever'" (57). So, Morganroth-Gullette argues that, first, society should start educating young people against "ageism" and not "aging," presenting aging as a natural and unavoidable process and not as something that they need to hate or fear. Also, young people should learn how to recognize "ageism"' as being an ableism, such as sexism or racism, and respond with tolerance and acceptance. The writer also highlights the way that younger women deal with aging; usually they "brand themselves" as old, even from the age of 25-years old. Thus, young women seem to have internalized the fear of getting old, thereby trying, even from a very young age, to exorcize aging.

The fourth chapter takes a different turn in the writer's approach and perspective and surveys the relation between farmers, in general, and "global graying." It is not only Earth that ages, but also the people that cultivate it. Thus, Morganroth-Gullette examines the societal marginalization that farmers are confronted with as they are often not even entitled to receiving pension. Also, the writer highlights the fact that many small-sized farmers live secluded in the land they cultivate. Global warming also affects these people leading to "loss of land and workers, climate destabilization, food insecurity" (89). At the same time, they are also excluded from the amenities of modern societies and, even, from access to their countries' health system facilities. Living in working conditions that speed their aging, farmers nowadays are regarded as a social burden by a large part of the society.

In chapters five and six, Morganroth-Gullette examines Alzheimer's disease and dementia in relation to aging. In the first session, the writer explains the relation between criminals responsible for the death of large groups, and their claims of suffering from dementia

during trials. The writer gives the example of Augusto Pinochet, the Chilean dictator, who claimed dementia and eventually died without being convicted of his crimes. On the other hand, the author also analyses this illness in relation to people who really suffer from it. Referring to her late mother as an example, Morganroth-Gullette explains that repetitiveness should not be dismissed "as a boring tic" (130), but rather valued as part of one's personal and family history.

In the following session, Morganroth-Gullette, focuses on "mercy-killing" between husband and wife, as a result of "marital caregiving," with the female patients more often being the victims: "In the circumstances of later-life illness, some old men kill old women who could scarcely be more closely related to them—their wives" (136). This is usually a practice of male caregivers who find it more difficult to offer caregiving services to ailing people. On the contrary, "older women do sometimes kill their spouses, or try to, but usually in retaliation for abuse" (137). In any case, the writer highlights that the law is not very strict, since there is the allegation that "old people are going to die anyway" (138), thus leaving a crime unpunished. Morganoroth-Gullette comments, that "if getting old is synonymous with being female (because more women live to be eighty or one hundred, and 'dementia' is becoming synonymous with getting old), A.D. is increasingly a woman's disease" (140).

Chapter seven, the last of the special sessions, is dedicated to "shame," which is wrongly related to "aging." As Morganroth-Gullette explains, "when aging serves as the trigger for ageism, shaming is its weapon" (163). Although shame is an emotion that usually emerges during adolescence, more frequently in young women, as people grow older this feeling seems to vanish. However, from the age of fifty onwards, "shame" reappears in people's lives. The writer explores the reasons why "shame" makes its reappearance past midlife, when people should feel more confident with themselves and with what they have conquered in life, surmising that

"perhaps age-shaming figures any time we suspect that we might be less wanted than heretofore" (164). According to Morganroth-Gullette, aging unavoidably makes people feel grief, since they begin to experience loss through the death of their parents and friends. As she explains, it is not only "age bias [that] causes grief" (183), but also "the death of friends [and] the unkindness of the living" (166). In order to make this grief disappear, many old people, especially women, turn to "self-blaming" and tend to combat aging, struggling to look "younger," thus resulting in the appearance of shame about their growing old. Nevertheless, the writer rightly points out that "aging should have nothing to do with shame, and shame should have nothing to do with aging."

Summing up, Margaret Morganroth-Gullette, highlights that the aim of society should be the termination of ageism that is wrongly related to aging. Also, there must be a stop in stereotyping "old age, in man or woman […] as weak" (193). Nevertheless, since modern societies and economies themselves employ ageist practices (for example, hiring young people and firing people over forty), she emphasizes the need to educate people from a very young age against social biases and cultural stereotypes. What needs to be done is, first, to educate people in locating "the source of ageism outside of one's self" and, then, make people realise that "ageism is prejudice against our feared future self" (64).

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